

Selling the American Dream: MoMA, Industrial Design and Post-War France

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**“Selling the American Dream:
MoMA and the Americanization of France”**

Gay McDonald

In the spring of 1955 the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) sent to the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris “50 Years of American Art” a vast retrospective exhibition staggering for the sheer breadth of its contents.¹ The organizers of the exhibition featured not only an imposing selection of twentieth century American painting and sculpture as one might expect, but also architecture, photography, printmaking, typography, film and mass-produced industrial design items. As such this was the largest and most aggressive statement to date about the vigor and originality of American visual culture ever to have been circulated within Europe.²

Not surprisingly, given its ambitiousness, “50 Years of American Art” has been the subject of periodic art historical investigation over the last three decades.³ Yet a review of the literature on the topic reveals that the terms of this somewhat sporadic discussion are relatively tightly circumscribed. Specifically, art writers have identified “50 Years of American Art” as noteworthy for one of two chief reasons both of which relate to the generous quota of abstract expressionist painting in the exhibition: First, as a crucial prelude to its much vaunted successor “The New American Painting” (1958) reputed to have secured abstract expressionism’s international preeminence just three years later.⁴ And second, as a tool of cultural diplomacy deployed by MoMA during the cold war to promote a positive image of the U.S. in Europe.⁵ Here I am referring to the well-known view that MoMA promoted the expressive freedom of abstract expressionism to distinguish American art from its socialist counterpart and to convince Europeans that the militarily and economically dominant U.S. defended the same values as they did.⁶ [Image 1: Willem de

Kooning *Gansevoort St.*, 1950-1951].

Studies of this kind have been crucial in encouraging a wholesale critique of abstract expressionism's canonical status within and beyond the U.S. With their focus upon drawing out the non-aesthetic agendas at play within MoMA's international exhibition program these studies are not without relevance to the present discussion. With that said, however, this paper proposes a marked shift of focus from these earlier accounts. While others have persuasively argued that abstract expressionism represented one of the U.S.'s more powerful cultural weapons, this paper considers the implications of sending abroad the other cargo featured in "50 Years of American Art" – the architectural models, furniture, flatware, kitchen appliances and tools - shipped into Paris in the same container.⁷

Using "50 Years of American Art" as a case study, this paper assesses the role of MoMA and the U.S. Government in promoting American industrial design within France during the cold war. I argue that these powerful institutions came to view such wares as a vital means of quelling French fears of American cultural homogenization and to build support for the American way of life. Adopting practices akin to nineteenth century American entrepreneurs, they also sought to foster the development of markets for American industrial design items in postwar Europe.

This discussion maintains a French focus, despite the fact that after leaving Paris MoMA sent a reconfigured and renamed version of the exhibition on a major tour of Europe, to Zurich, Barcelona, Frankfurt, London, The Hague, Vienna and Belgrade.⁸ The French focus is warranted on the grounds that Paris was the only venue to receive all sections of this multimedia extravaganza, including the industrial design items.⁹ As importantly, the exhibition formed

part of “Salute to France” a grandiose arts festival arranged by the United States Information Service (USIS) in collaboration with the American private sector, according to official reports, as a tribute to French civilization.¹⁰ In other words, MoMA constructed “50 Years of American Art” with a primarily French audience in mind. The merit of assessing the implications of MoMA’s presentation of such content to French viewers at this time should not be underestimated. According to the historian Richard Kuisel, in the early 1950s French intellectuals on the right and left became concerned that the arrival of American consumerism and mass culture would dilute and weaken French identity.¹¹

This was by no means the first time that MoMA had sent abroad exhibitions incorporating such content. Between 1951 and 1955 MoMA had prepared and circulated in Europe three exhibitions dedicated exclusively to American mass-produced and handmade design items: “Design for Use, U.S.A.” (1951-1952) “U.S. Selections for Berlin Trade Fair” (1952-1954) and “American Design for Home and Decorative Use” (1953-1955). As is widely recognized, exhibitions assembled by art museums are notoriously complex affairs. Rarely, if ever, the singular vision of the individual curator, they are typically the offspring of a network of influences and constraints, emanating from within and beyond the organizing institution. Moreover, they can and regularly do serve a range of conflicting agendas. This is no less the case for the afore- mentioned exhibitions. While ostensibly selected by MoMA to promote awareness of American design in Europe, each had been the result of collaboration between MoMA and one of a number of U.S. government agencies among them the Department of State, the Mutual Security Agency and the United States Information Agency. As such these exhibitions should also be

understood as part of an informal effort to further the prevailing economic and strategic interests of the U.S. in Europe.

Design historian Arthur J. Pulos offers evidence to corroborate the latter point of view. He argues that in the early 1950s the U.S. Government became increasingly interested in sending export products to Europe after learning that the USSR had been distributing its wares to trade fairs with the primary goal of promoting communism. Underlying the Federal Government's interest was the realization that capitalism and communism were now facing each other along a frontier of developing countries that were, as yet, politically as well as economically uncommitted.¹² Despite this situation, there existed no single government agency responsible for arranging official U.S. representations at European trade fairs until the establishment in 1955 of the Office of International Trade Fairs.

In the absence of any such official government body, and possessed of a demonstrated commitment to the value of international cultural exchange MoMA assumed a crucial 'unofficial' foreign service role.¹³ Responding to requests from government officials at home and abroad MoMA prepared traveling exhibitions of American design items for tour internationally. A number of key aims can be identified: to build awareness of American design practice, to stimulate trade and to help persuade Europeans of the high standard of living enjoyed within the United States.¹⁴

A case in point is the exhibition "Design for Use, USA" (1951-1952) jointly sponsored by the State Department and the European Cooperation Administration and circulated in Europe between 1951 and 1952 [Image 2: Cover page "Design for Use, USA"]. In this instance, Edgar Kaufmann Jr. former Director of MoMA's Department of Industrial Design, drew together over five

hundred objects for the domestic setting.¹⁵ Collectively “Design for Use, USA” demonstrated the material benefits of modern American life. Kaufmann showcased consumer objects designed to enhance everyday living including recent innovations in electric ovens and refrigerators, and luxurious furnishing fabrics and kitchen equipment. His decision to send over gimmicky attention-seeking objects like rugs of paper, a small revolving dining chair and a clear plastic bassinet led one American commentator to conclude that the exhibition was intended to convey the “ingenuity of American designers”.¹⁶ But clearly the American curator also assembled “Design for Use, USA” with an eye to persuading Europeans of the merits of American design and, one might conclude, to position it as a viable competitor in a recovering postwar European economy.

That Kaufmann seriously entertained such agendas is strongly supported by the fact that the impetus for “Design for Use, USA,” emerged directly out of the Good Design program, spear-headed by Kaufmann and hailed as MoMA’s most ambitious exhibition program in the applied arts.¹⁷ The program, envisioned by Kaufmann as an alliance between “art and commerce”, was conceived in late 1949.¹⁸ On behalf of MoMA, he established a partnership with the Chicago-based Merchandise Mart, the biggest wholesale marketer in the U.S., to select examples of innovative “purchasable” American design for display in exhibitions held in Chicago and then New York.¹⁹ The aim of the Program, according to MoMA director René d’Harnoncourt, was to “stimulate the appreciation and creation of the best design among manufacturers, designers, and retailers for good living in the American home.”²⁰ The Program also strove to influence the ‘buying habits of American consumers.’²¹

Less than a year after MoMA had embarked on the Good Design venture with the Merchandise Mart, and buoyed by the apparently enthusiastic responses of Europeans and Americans to these exhibitions,²² MoMA expanded the reach of this bold initiative to include European consumers.²³ Moreover, in a statement released to the media, Kaufmann made clear that “Design for Use, USA” would play a key role in helping to shape European perceptions of contemporary American life. Significantly, Kaufmann’s pronouncement was made without igniting the kind of local political furor generated by government-sponsored exhibitions of modern art.²⁴ Thus despite government sponsorship these exhibitions of industrial design would serve as a vital and non-controversial means of promoting positive aspects of the U.S.²⁵ Using rhetoric typical of the cold war era, Kaufmann confidently asserted that,

In Europe, as well as in America we have found a wonderful response in the press to our “Good Design” exhibitions at The Merchandise Mart in Chicago. This encourages the belief that a discriminating show of American home furnishing design can present the best and most progressive side of our life to the European public in terms which are internationally understandable and sympathetic.²⁶

Many of the vetted design items previously seen by audiences of the Good Design exhibitions in Chicago and New York became the basis of “Design for Use, USA” and subsequent exhibitions of industrial design.²⁷ For the first exhibition Kaufmann incorporated chairs, divans, tables, lights, glassware, and plastic products by leading American designers and manufacturers among them the Herman Miller Furniture Co., Knoll & Associates, Corning Glass Works, and the Tupper Corporation.

While also featuring industrial design “50 Years of American Art” represented a rather different kind of cultural initiative to that of the preceding exhibitions. Where the aforementioned exhibitions were displayed under the auspices of the sponsoring government agency, “50 Years of American Art”

appeared in Paris at the National Museum of Modern Art with the exclusive imprimatur of MoMA, by this time the most powerful museum at mid-century. More significantly perhaps, the generous design quotient appeared, not in isolation, as was previously the case, but in conjunction with representations from every department of the Museum's collection. Futuristic designer chairs by, for example, Charles Eames, Harry Bertoia and Eero Saarinen appeared alongside cocktail shakers, shrimp-cleaners and plastic products by Tupperware giant Earl C. Tupper.²⁸ [Image 3: Chairs] The exhibition also featured a retrospective of twentieth century developments in American painting and sculpture and a display of stills of 'historically significant' American movies by D.W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin and John Ford, amongst others. And for the duration of the exhibition USIS Paris screened a program of American films supplied by MoMA.²⁹ Along with the more recent triumphs of American postwar architecture, the exhibition provided French viewers with tangible evidence of the American lifestyle, much of which had only been glimpsed at in Hollywood movies.

Despite MoMA's obvious intention to impress, some French observers complained about the overwhelming breadth of content presented within "50 Years of American Art". Of the exhibition Pierre Descargues of *Les Lettres Françaises* wrote "But there it is; they wanted to show us everything, from toys for children to paintings for grownups. Only a Cadillac, a jet plane and an H-bomb are lacking but will undoubtedly be included another time."³⁰ Descargues' acerbic remark can be understood at one level as a thinly veiled jab at the rapidly growing strength of the American military and industrial presence within postwar Europe. Yet his comment also suggests that the show's rather

unconventional contents conflicted with local expectations about what should be presented within an art exhibition.

The inclusion of such a diverse array of non-high art goods precipitated a controversy not only amongst some elements of the French press. In his column for the *Christian Science Monitor* Carlton Lake reported to his American readership that even an employee of the National Museum of Modern Art, where “50 Years of American Art” opened, had been horrified by the inclusion of “household articles in an art show.”³¹ The reaction of this unnamed employee is perhaps not surprising given that at this time mainstream French art institutions (like many of their American counterparts) understood that the care and collection of the so-called fine arts represented the proper preserve of the art museum. Moreover, the division between the fine arts and household arts was supported institutionally within Paris by the existence of the *Salon des Arts Ménagers* (Salon of Household Arts), an organization dedicated to the celebration of household appliances, decorative arts, furniture and architecture. Begun in 1923 by French technocrat Jules-Louis Breton, the *Salon des Appareils Ménagers*, as it was originally named, sought to “display new appliances, to encourage sales, and facilitate an ‘encounter between practical and elegant appliances and the mass of consumers.’”³²

As with most exhibitions, several stakeholders had input into the final form of “50 Years of American Art”. Of interest here, particularly in light of Lake’s comment, is that one of the chief architects of the exhibition was Jean Cassou, the director of the National Museum of Modern Art, [Image 4: Jean Cassou and Renée d’Harnoncourt]. In 1952 Cassou had initiated what would become an informal relationship with MoMA to host that museum’s most prestigious surveys of American art during the decade of the 1950s. Why he did

so can be attributed, in part, to the French director's commitment to the benefits of international cultural exchange.³³

From the inception of the National Museum of Modern Art in 1946, Cassou had demonstrated his high regard for the art of other nations by hosting exhibitions from Mexico, Poland, Belgium, Italy, Russia, Haiti, Cuba, Japan, Hungary, Switzerland, Holland, and Norway.³⁴ His enthusiasm for such an enterprise was not disinterested. With minimal resources, Cassou devised a regular program of foreign art exhibitions at the National Museum of Modern Art to signal to the French public, and to other nations, the renewed importance of postwar Paris as a center of artistic ferment and artistic validation for other nations. Within this program, the National Museum of Modern Art had already presented to its various constituencies MoMA's "12 Modern American Painters and Sculptors" in 1953 and "Contemporary Drawings in the USA" in 1954. Now the French director pressed MoMA for a change of direction. And from all reports, it was he who actively encouraged the inclusion of such unorthodox content. The type of show he envisioned would portray "the twentieth century spirit of America."³⁵ While painting and sculpture might form the backbone of the exhibition, Cassou requested that MoMA include design items, architecture, and film.³⁶

Cassou's request for such a show should be considered in relation to his belief that modern art could only be understood in relation to what he described as "the social order, the decoration, literature, fashions [and] ideas – the whole material and spiritual life of our time."³⁷ This point he reiterated in the catalogue preface for "50 Years of American Art": "What better measure have we of the taste of an epoch" he wrote, "what clearer index of the penetration of an aesthetic standard, than the style and beauty which are reflected by its chairs, its

drinking glasses, even its tools.”³⁸ Installation shots of the permanent collection at the National Museum of Modern Art clearly demonstrate an effort to implement this philosophy, even if the final effect appears relatively restrained [Image 5: installation shot “1900 Room” at the National Museum of Modern Art c.1947]. In Cassou’s opinion, the purpose of installing furniture, photos, and manuscripts alongside painting and sculpture was to convey as he put it “that works of art are not isolated or arbitrary phenomena, but part of a whole, and that this whole is our own contemporary life.”³⁹

That “50 Years of American Art” included industrial design items, architecture and film certainly indicates that MoMA officials had accommodated Cassou’s requirements. If so, the decision to do so could hardly have been difficult. After all, MoMA had a legitimate opportunity to showcase its unique conceptualization of the modern museum.⁴⁰ From its inception in 1929, Alfred H. Barr Jr., then director, had conceived of MoMA as an institution embracing all the modern arts, a key factor that would eventually differentiate MoMA from other museums, locally and internationally. As Barr put it,

In time the Museum would probably expand beyond the narrow limits of painting and sculpture in order to include departments devoted to drawings, prints, and photography, typography, the arts of design in commerce and industry, architecture...stage designing, furniture and the decorative arts. Not the least important might be the filmotek, a library of films.⁴¹

By 1940 MoMA had presented exhibitions or established departments devoted to the various arts Barr had originally proposed in 1929 including industrial design, architecture, photography and typography, along with the more traditional arts of painting and sculpture.⁴² According to MoMA biographer Russell Lynes, by 1954 the year of its twenty-fifth birthday, “the museum was riding the crest of its popularity and influence...” Lynes claimed that,

[it] had made...films a legitimate subject for study and... did

much the same for photography... by giving [it] the dignity of an art...It had dealt seriously and attractively...with architecture and city planning, with the quality of posters for highways, and with the design of the automobiles that traveled them. It had concerned itself with the intimate environment-with domestic architecture on a small scale, with textiles and furniture, with the mechanical and hand tools that make servantless life workable and pleasing...[In short] it had made modern art chic as well as fashionable.⁴³

Thus to send to Paris an exhibition like “50 Years of American Art” which showcased the breadth of MoMA’s holdings served as a fitting way to celebrate that museum’s achievements to date. And more significantly, the exhibition with its inclusion of the less traditional arts of industrial design, photography, and typography issued a challenge to French viewers about the boundaries of modern art and of what should constitute the preserve of the modern museum.⁴⁴ While such a scenario provides an adequate account of events it fails to address the high stakes involved for the staff of MoMA and of USIS Paris who collaborated in the organization of this exhibition.⁴⁵

The nature of these stakes emerged at MoMA within a meeting of the newly formed International Council held in May 1954 just a month after USIS Paris had decided to mount “Salute to France”, the cultural festival within which “50 Years of American Art” would appear. The central topic of concern for representatives of both institutions was the abysmal status of the U.S. within Europe.⁴⁶ MoMA director René d’Harncourt launched the discussion and sought to persuade the International Council members of the ongoing need to improve the international standing of the United States through cultural exchange. As he put it, “One of the great problems in our relationship to the world is the difficulty of making people believe that the U.S. is interested in anything but economic and political power.” For this reason it was imperative to show the world

the essential humanness of Americans as evidenced by our considerable cultural achievement," [and to] "defend cultural freedom in the United States when this freedom is endangered, as it frequently is, by pressure groups in and out of the government."⁴⁷

Lawrence Morris, the Cultural Attaché at USIS Paris reiterated in general terms the sentiment of d'Harnoncourt's delivery but focused exclusively on the French situation.⁴⁸ In his delivery Morris made known that French resistance to the American way of life had reached a critical point. The turn in Franco-American relations necessarily troubled USIS Paris, an organization dedicated to securing French support for U.S. foreign policy, the more so in the context of the cold war. Morris also noted that since World War II the U.S. had been in a position economically, politically and industrially to decide France's future and to shape the world in which the French were to live. The bottom line was that the French did not like the American way of life. The French public, he maintained, believed that increased industrialization in the United States had led to a far greater emphasis on collective thinking and on decision-making based on statistical analysis, rather than in terms of the needs of the individual. This line of thinking, Morris remarked, had been articulated in Georges Duhamel's *America the Menace* (1931), an ardent anti-modernist critique of American life.⁴⁹

Duhamel's publication, a bestseller in the inter-war period, had played a key role in defining the French view of the U.S. as a land of standardization and materialism. After touring the United States Duhamel concluded that the machine set the pace of American life and required of its inhabitants blind conformity. He, like André Siegfried, another prominent French inter-war writer, smugly concluded that Americans might have had more wealth and power than the French. But in his opinion they were controlled by businessmen like Henry Ford, who transformed them into producers and consumers, and in

the process created a nation of conformists and cultural philistines.⁵⁰

Duhamel's ideas were taken up with renewed vigor by French observers critical of American life after World War II. Richard F. Kuisel argues that the challenge for the French at this time was how to attain the economic and social benefits of the American model without the perceived downsides of cultural and economic philistinism and social conformity. Less interested in the impact of American philosophy, literary criticism, history, social science, and art, they focused their attention on America as a socioeconomic and cultural model and specifically how the arrival of American consumerism and mass culture would affect French culture.⁵¹

It was these fears that Morris highlighted in his delivery to members of the International Council. "There is this doubt" he noted "whether the American world provides the individual with the right to think to be different from his neighbors and adopt a creative attitude towards his own life."⁵² Morris urged the International Council to support MoMA's efforts to heighten French awareness of twentieth century American cultural achievements. Such achievements he believed implicitly bespoke the individuality and freedom of thought so dear to the French. By these means, MoMA would play a key role in easing French concerns of Americanization, and, in turn, build support for the American way of life. And for Morris, who in negotiation with MoMA became a strident advocate of Cassou's desire to include non high art wares in "50 Years of American Art", this mission could best be achieved via an exhibition incorporating not only painting and sculpture, but also architecture, industrial design and film.⁵³

French anxieties about being eventually swamped by the economic and cultural encroachment of the U.S. were hardly unjustified. Having established a

strong commercial base in Europe in the first two decades of the twentieth century, enterprising Americans began to shore up their investments in the interwar years through the purchase of the most advanced industries, the establishment of partnerships with local firms, and by setting up factories.⁵⁴ Woolworths and other American retail chains also entered the European market in the same period and offered a large selection of American goods at low prices. While these developments triggered increased anxiety over cultural homogenization, the United States' economic and social impact on Europe was still relatively small during the inter-war period.⁵⁵

However, the situation changed dramatically in the 1950s, when the U.S. began to dominate the economies of Western Europe and Britain to an unprecedented extent.⁵⁶ As Tom Crow notes,

The cash and stimulus to organization provided by the Americans' Marshall Plan of 1948-52 had propelled record levels of production and economic growth on the Continent. The promise of enhanced levels of personal consumptions for the general population was a crucial arm of the 'Western' confrontation with Communism, and rapidly increasing access to decent housing, appliances, automobiles, travel, and entertainments appeared to be making the promise good.⁵⁷

France, in particular, felt the impact upon its economy. With incomes rising faster than the cost of living, French wage earners experienced the benefits of a rapid increase in purchasing power. That coupled with more easily available credit led to a 40 percent increase in household consumption in France between 1950 and 1957.⁵⁸ Spending patterns also changed. Between 1949 and 1957 the number of home appliances rose by 400 percent.⁵⁹ And large sums of money were now spent on televisions, cars, radios, music, sports and photographic equipment, much of these products having been imported from the U.S. While French wage-earners were eager to adopt a more 'Americanized' lifestyle, their aspirations were not matched by French intellectuals, government workers or

members of the upper class who grew increasingly alarmed about the implications of such changes for French culture.

With the backing of the International Council secured, MoMA shortly after began the preparations for “50 Years of American Art”. This was the next major exhibition of American art MoMA sent to France. Given the situation mapped out by Morris, the inclusion of the very kind of cultural production that had precipitated such anxiety amongst French elites, might have struck some observers as odd or even unwise.⁶⁰ On the contrary, an examination of the installation of this multimedia extravaganza and the accompanying catalogue worked to produce some persuasive stories about recent American cultural production. Two main narratives can be isolated. The more blatant of the two amounted to a bold assertion of post-war abstraction’s astonishing individuality.

Twentieth century American painting and sculpture dominated “50 Years of American Art”, filling almost the entire upper floor of the National Museum of Modern Art. [Image 6: Installation plan of the painting and sculpture section of “50 Years of American Art”]. But abstract expressionist painting received top billing, its star status made evident via the movement’s sheer dominance within the painting and sculpture section and its position within the galleries. MoMA director René d’Harnoncourt, who flew to Paris to install the exhibition, arranged the paintings in roughly chronological order orchestrating a dramatic buildup from early modernism through to postwar abstraction, situating the latter as the peak of American cultural achievements.

Within his carefully crafted catalogue essay Holger Cahill further embroidered the point. Into his discussion Cahill wove the remarkable story of American cultural emancipation. This process involved the overthrow of

academic doctrine in the nineteenth century, the ushering in of European modernism in the early twentieth century and finally liberation from foreign influence in the 1940s with the rise of the abstract expressionists. By diminishing the role of foreign influence, and by highlighting the revolutionary nature of the abstract expressionists' spatial innovations and freedom of expression, Cahill confidently asserted that abstract expressionism represented the most original art form to have ever emerged in the U.S. While expressing uncertainty about the future path of American art, of one thing Cahill was certain. Any new direction would develop independently of Europe and the East, because the long tutelage of American artists was over.⁶¹

The dominance of these mural scale canvases filled with gestural brush marks or flooded with all-over compositions and the repeated references to individuality and freedom of expressionism effectively set the art of the American camp apart from socialist productions while signaling its embrace of values fundamental to the Western art tradition. While such an assertion likely falls flat today, this narrative was redolent with significance within the context of the cold war.

A second less explicit but equally powerful narrative is also discernible within the exhibition: that of the U.S. as a nation capable of transforming the more technical areas of cultural production into aesthetically significant art forms. Within the areas of architecture and industrial design this narrative emerges most emphatically.

The architecture of the postwar era literally opened the show. [Image 7: Installation view of Architecture section, "50 Years of American Art"]. As one French observer wrote "Entering through the architectural display, the spectator is plunged immediately into the very heart of American life."⁶² Giant photos

twenty feet in height, and scale models and plans offered viewers a range of interpretations of the skyscrapers, factories, and homes displayed. By means of stereoscopic slides, it was even possible to 'enter' into the interiors of some of the exhibited works. Most of the buildings included would now readily pass as icons of modernist architecture, among them *Lever House* by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, the *Johnson Wax Company Building* by Frank Lloyd Wright, and domestic dwellings by Charles Eames, Philip Johnson and Richard Neutra.

According to Arthur Drexler, Curator of the Department of Architecture and Design at MoMA all the buildings had been chosen for their exemplary aesthetic value and because they represented the most significant directions in American architecture in recent years.⁶³ He and Henry Russell-Hitchcock derived the architectural component from the exhibition "Built in the USA: Postwar Architecture" which they had assembled for MoMA two years earlier.⁶⁴ Hitchcock launched into his essay by asserting the international preeminence of American architecture from the mid twentieth century. This situation he attributed to a buoyant economy and to the influence of American as well as European talents, chief among them Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, key exponents of the International Style. Along with Frank Lloyd Wright, he argued that these towering figures of modern architecture offered new directions now pursued by younger architects thus preventing modern architecture from becoming monolithic as "some have hoped and others feared."⁶⁵

As importantly, Hitchcock constructed a key role for big business in fostering the creation of what he described as the recent emergence of luxurious American architecture. Business, he claimed had moved against the trend adopted by architects of recent decades who "prated only of economy."⁶⁶ Aware

of the advertising advantages of striking architecture, these powerful corporations had willingly assumed the mantle of architectural patrons. Likening them to the Roman statesman and literary patron of Virgil and Horace, Hitchcock remarked that these “more conspicuous American Maecenas”, among them Lever Brothers in New York, General Motors in Detroit, the Johnson Wax Company in Racine had ‘backed their architects in putting quality before economy.’⁶⁷ Why? Because, as Hitchcock concluded “Architecture is not merely an aspect of the practical side of civilization.”⁶⁸ Thus within the new Rome, Hitchcock proposed that a productive partnership between industry and the leading architects of the U.S. had stimulated the flowering of aesthetically significant even “beautiful” architecture.

A similar story about the capacity of the U.S. to imbue technical areas of cultural production with a high degree of aesthetic merit was taken up equally forcefully in the industrial design component. But with a slight variation. Here the emphasis was upon demonstrating how leading American designers and manufacturers had used techniques of mass production to produce aesthetically pleasing industrial design items that captured the technological spirit of the age. [Image 8: Kitchen Utensils and Tools, “50 Years of American Art”]. Greta Daniel, the curator, argued the case in various ways. No longer, she wrote, was aesthetic merit dependent upon cost nor was it linked only to the hand productions of the artist.⁶⁹ Low cost mass-produced items now offered a viable alternative having been determined not only by the means of production and technique but also by contemporary aesthetics. And there were alternatives from which to choose. So well conceived were these American ‘productions of industry’, that Daniel proclaimed them ‘the decorative arts of the 20th century’.⁷⁰ According to Daniel, the American housewife, who did all the housework

despite enjoying a higher standard of living than her European counterparts, made for a discerning judge. In deciding upon the selection of domestic and utilitarian objects, the American housewife applied the same aesthetic standards as she would in the choice of home décor.⁷¹

While acknowledging the discriminating taste of American housewives, Daniel made no bones about foregrounding the crucial role played by MoMA in the process of elevating the tastes of Americans. For it was MoMA that Daniel put forward as the institution blessed with the capacity to identify the artfulness of such seemingly unorthodox objects. Tupperware, amply represented within “50 Years of American Art”, provides a useful case in point.⁷² [Image 9: “Plastic Kitchen Utensils” “50 Years of American Art”]. Although not discussed specifically by Daniel, a clue to MoMA’s aestheticization of Tupperware can be gleaned from Alison J. Clarke who has written about MoMA’s national promotion of these popular polyethylene products. According to Clarke, for MoMA “Tupperware embodied the machine aesthetic of a technologically determined functional form. Based on this modernist rationale, Tupperware items were judged ‘uncluttered’ and ‘carefully considered shapes...marvelously free of that vulgarity which characterizes so much household equipment.”⁷³

“In putting together a permanent collection,” Daniel wrote, “MoMA is no less rigorous in the choice of these works than for its strictly artistic collections.”⁷⁴ Thus although these objects weren’t ‘strictly’ art they came close, having received the official sanctification of that acclaimed cultural tastemaker, MoMA. With the addition of soft spot lighting, and a tasteful distance maintained between items these humble objects were promoted by MoMA to French audiences as classics of American mass production, worthy of being displayed on par with MoMA’s other collections. The decision to include in the

catalogue the full details of the designer, company, manufacturer, city and state for each of the one hundred and sixty objects of industrial design seems to have been an attempt to promote these items in the same way as the 'strictly artistic' works featured in the exhibition. At the same time the move could also be interpreted as a means to promote the interests of American manufacturers and designers in an improving European economy.

How did French critics respond to the exhibition? And more specifically, how successful had MoMA been in quelling fears of American cultural homogenization or of building support for the American way of life?⁷⁵ The French critical reaction generated by the exhibition can hardly be characterized as uniform. Some French critics were highly dismissive of the exhibition, a reaction no doubt fuelled, in part, by the difficult national adjustments to the declining military and economic stature of France. Alongside these concerns, prevailing fears of growing American consumer cultural influence were also given a timely outlet in at least some of the press reviews generated by the exhibition. Recalling the anti-Americanism of Georges Duhamel, Maurice Armand of the extreme right-wing journal *Rivarol* claimed that,

All the essential elements are there of a civilization which will evoke in us either enthusiasm or horror...how can one overcome an indefinable uneasiness provoked by these deliberate assaults on our esthetic sensibilities? The fragility of our dying civilization is reaffirmed in the face of the monstrous visage of America, protagonist of a barbarous revolution. While waiting for its force to overwhelm us, this force cannot seem to us other than [foreign].⁷⁶

Others identified clear political motives behind the staging of the exhibition. Guy Dornand, for example, dismissed the entire affair as a giant public relations event staged to aggrandize the American camp. With tongue-in-cheek, Dornand mocked the exhibition's contents:

It is, as Winston Churchill might say, a very tasty biscuit that the United States offers us in the "Salute to France"Arranged with all the lavishness of which the most official organizations on both sides of the ocean are capable, it envelopes everything in the world in every realm in which a nation's esthetic sense might reveal itself...With equal care it spreads before us photographs and gigantic models of buildings, paintings and prints, chairs, pressure cookers, shrimp cleaners and aspirin boxes. There is something here for all the esthetes...Thus, thanks to almost 300 works--exclusive of the household utensils--we would be able to get a complete vision of the 'artistic' creativity of our powerful allies, to which the laws of hospitality have required us to devote a major portion of the Musée d'Art Moderne.⁷⁷

Yet, curiously, only a minority of respondents echoed the sentiments of the above critics.⁷⁸ The vast scope of "50 Years of American Art" with its inclusion of kitchen appliances, chairs, films, flatware, glassware, paintings and architecture prompted vigorous discussion of the technological aspects of the American lifestyle and its implications for France. In addition, this format encouraged many French critics to use the exhibition as a kind of rosetta stone or key to deciphering American civilization. According to American critic Dore Ashton, European critics placed a high premium on being able to identify a correlation between the defining characteristics of a given nation and its cultural production.⁷⁹ The existence of such connections appears to have been considered a necessary prerequisite of cultural maturation. In this instance, critics located in the exhibition evidence of a vast new world capable of producing art forms in harmony with its limitless industrial strength. And, for many French critics it was within the so-called American 'collective arts' of industrial design, architecture, photography and film that American artists had demonstrated a new cultural maturity. In fact, a recurring theme emerged within the criticism generated by the exhibition, of the U.S. as a "modern" mass civilization, shaped by mass production, great wealth, science, logic, and rapid industrialization and well positioned to cater to the "collective" needs of the "greatest number."

Given the decisive influence of these factors, it was somehow viewed as natural and appropriate that the Americans would master the “collective” arts. Georges Menant, for example, claimed that it was the prosperity of the U.S., specifically its success in the area of mass production, that had determined its mastery in architecture as well a range of other arts. “Mechanization,” he wrote,

has given birth to a new Middle Ages, an anonymous art, for the use of the greatest number. The phenomenon may be noted particularly in applied arts: furniture...designed at once for mass production and for integration with the architecture; utensils, machines and tools which derive their esthetic from their functional requirements and the requirements of mass production; typography and advertising, conditioned by the need to communicate an idea, a thought, a message to the greatest number...not to mention photography and...film...which are *par excellence* arts of widespread diffusion--at once the most “industrial” and the most popular of the arts...⁸⁰

Bernard Champigneulle also drew a correlation between the industrial thrust of American civilization and its architecture. Though he considered Americans “past masters” in the applied arts, he claimed that American architecture represented “the masterwork...of a nation dedicated to industrial civilization.”⁸¹ Given the industrial thrust of the United States, this was not a surprising turn of events for Champigneulle. Architecture “had long represented an attempt to reconcile practical necessities with the conscious beauty of technical procedures.”⁸² I. Guichard-Meili who wrote for the neutralist Catholic newspaper *Témoignage Chrétien* voiced the same opinion. American architecture not only signaled the emergence of a distinctive American art. This was the form of expression fittingly exemplifying a “modern civilization” ruled by science, logic and enormous wealth:

Before these colossal structures of glass and steel with their vigorously marked rhythms, as before the mass-produced useful objects which derive from logically studied models, one can no longer deny the existence of a form of expression specifically characteristic of that society ruled by science in which America has revealed to us our future--a future not without peril, but also not without grandeur.⁸³

These remarks about the U.S. as a 'modern' mass civilization best suited to producing mass cultural forms might seem timely and apt given the technological sophistication and industrial might of the U.S. However, defining American civilization on such grounds was not a new phenomenon. It in fact conformed to the early nineteenth-century image of the United States as a symbol of the New World, in contrast to the Old World of Europe. Richard Pells claims that this dichotomy served a crucial normative function for Europeans and Americans alike: "It pointed to a disparate set of values and attributes; it emphasized antagonistic ideals and patterns of behavior; it helped the people of each continent define their separate identities by using the Other as a foil, a negative image, a lesson in what to avoid."⁸⁴

Certainly, some of the reviews by French critics conform to Pell's characterization. Yet, as the foregoing discussion attests, other critics invoked the same binary opposition but they discussed the technological aspects of American civilization in relatively positive manner. Why such a reaction occurred can be linked to the fact that this facet of the exhibition, with its vast selection of artfully designed 'consumables' provided tangible evidence of how the American model could be used to advantage. To this extent, we might conclude that the exhibition organizers had had a modicum of success in helping to reduce fears that a future led by the U.S. necessarily meant a loss of individuality, and a need to succumb to an offensive standardization of taste. Yet by proclaiming American mastery in the realm of mass culture or the technical arts, on socio-cultural grounds, one could reasonably assert that even receptive critics had effectively sealed off the possibility of American artists attaining mastery in the so-called "high arts" of painting and sculpture, which, by implication, remained the exclusive preserve of the French.⁸⁵

The findings of this paper indicate the need to broaden the terms of the debate surrounding MoMA's cold war activities beyond that of its current role as the principal champion internationally of abstract expressionism, which, as has been amply demonstrated it sent forth to fulfill a range of extra-aesthetic agendas. The intertwining narratives embedded within the rhetoric of the catalogue for "50 Years of American Art" generated a complex message about the United States at mid-century, not only about the existence of American culture but of its vigor and dynamism in all facets of American life. This message was certainly powerfully asserted through MoMA's presentation of abstract expressionism. But as the foregoing discussion attests, MoMA also made liberal use of the diversity of its collections to achieve a variety of agendas—economic, political and cultural—at this volatile moment in the history of its relations with France.

In the face of growing concerns amongst French elites about the perceived threat of American-style cultural homogenization and with the support of USIS Paris, MoMA sent to Paris "50 Years of American Art" to buff up the U.S.'s reputation as a free, democratic nation well placed to lead the world in the postwar years. To this end, the exhibition organizers strove to put a positive gloss on daily life in the United States, of the kinds of buildings Americans lived in and worked in and the type of mass produced design items, kitchen appliances, tools, and household accessories they used. Most notably "50 Years of American Art" forcefully (and apparently persuasively) championed the view that the United States, far from being controlled by its industrial might, as Duhamel argued, had established creative ways of harnessing that power to enhance the every day life of its citizenry. And within that scheme, MoMA as the principal gatekeeper constructed a leading role for

itself as an arbiter and educator of taste.

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Jean Cassou (director of the Musée national d'art moderne) and René d'Harnoncourt (director of the Museum of Modern Art) examining an architectural model from the exhibition "50 Years of American Art", Paris, 1955.

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Installation shot "1900 Room"
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"Plastic Kitchen Utensils"
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¹ A version of this paper was presented at the College Art Association Conference in Philadelphia in 2002 in the session "Containment, Conflict and Control: Revisiting the Visual Culture of the Cold War". I would like to thank the session chair David McCarthy, Katherine Manthorne and Penny McKeon for their comments on earlier drafts.

² This was not the first 'blockbuster' style exhibition of American art to have been sent to Paris by MoMA. In 1938 MoMA sent to the Jeu de Paume "Three Centuries of American Art", an exhibition of American painting, sculpture, prints, film, photography and architecture. The exhibition, widely touted by MoMA staff as the most comprehensive display of American art ever shown in Europe, had been constructed specifically for French consumption. Yet apart from the film and architecture, French critics resoundingly savaged the exhibition. A. Conger Goodyear to Barr, n.d, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Registrar Exhibition Files, Exh. #76a. "Three Centuries of American Art" – Correspondence Barr.

³ See E. Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War," *Art Forum* 12, June 1974, pp. 39–41; M. Kozloff, "American Painting During the Cold War," *Art Forum* 13, May 1973, pp. 43–54; M. D. Plante, "The 'Second Occupation,' American Expatriate Painters and the Reception of American Art in Paris, 1946-1958" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1992); M. Kimmelman, "Revisiting the Revisionists: The Modern, Its Critics, and the Cold War," *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*. John Elderfield, ed. *Studies in Modern Art*, 4, The Museum of Modern Art, 1995, pp. 39–55.

⁴ According to Hayden Herrera, for example, both shows were important, but it was "The New American Painting" that finally "opened European eyes to Abstract Expressionism." Hayden Herrera, "Postwar American Art in Holland," in R. Fuchs and A. D. Weinberg, *Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art I*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995, pp. 34–35.

⁵ Eva Cockcroft likewise singles out "Modern Art in the U.S.A." but she identifies "The New American Painting" as the linchpin in this endeavor. See E. Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," reprinted in *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*, eds., F. Frascina and J. Harris, Phaidon, 1992, pp. 82–90.

⁶ S. Guilbaut, "Postwar Painting Games: The Rough and the Slick," *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris and Montreal, 1945-1964* ed., S. Guilbaut, MIT, 1990, p. 33.

⁷ Art historian Linda Nochlin argues that the use of American high culture represented only a secondary aspect of American imperialism. "The Museum of Modern Art," *Modern Art - Practices and Debates*, [videorecording] BBC for the Open University, 1994.

⁸ Reformulated and re-titled "Modern Art in the United States: A Selection from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art", New York, the exhibition toured to Zurich, Barcelona, Frankfurt, London, The Hague, Vienna, and Belgrade. Zurich took all sections but not the industrial design component. Barcelona, Frankfurt and Austria took the painting, sculpture, prints and architecture section.

⁹ H. Herrera, "Postwar American Art in Holland" in R. Fuchs and A. D. Weinberg, *Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art I*, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995, pp. 34–35). Herrera notes that industrial design and architecture was included in the Dutch showing of the exhibition. While architecture was indeed included, no design items were sent on to The Hague because of the extensive damage and theft to the design section while on display in Paris. See P. McCray to Prof., Dr. E. Holzinger, August 17, 1955, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): unprocessed.

¹⁰ J. Flanner (Genêt), "April 13, 1955," in *Paris Journal 1944-1965*, William Shawn ed., Atheneum, 1965, p. 270. USIS functioned as the international arm of the Office of International Information and Educational Exchange specializing in cultural and informational activities.

¹¹ R. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization*, University of California Press, 1993, p. 113. As Kuisel notes, the debate in the 1950s was heavily marked by ideology. Most of the observers were convinced that America was no 'consumer paradise' and tried to reveal that fact to their readers.

¹² A. J. Pulos, *The American Design Adventure: 1940-1975*, The MIT Press, 1988, p. 242.

¹³ For a discussion of MoMA's international activities from 1933 onwards see Helen M. Franc, "The Early Years of the International Program and Council" in J. Elderfield, ed., *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad. Studies in Modern Art 4*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1995, 112-114.

¹⁴ A. J. Pulos, *The American Design Adventure*, p. 243, 246, 248.

¹⁵ Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. became the Director of the Department of Industrial Design in 1946. When the Department of Industrial Design amalgamated with the Department of Architecture in 1949, Kaufmann became an Advisor and Research Associate to the newly formed Department of Architecture and Design.

¹⁶ H. Morrison, "Today's Living: Museum Designs Going Abroad," *Herald Tribune*, New York, 3/8/1951, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Department of Public Information Records, I [14; 670].

¹⁷ T. Riley and E. Eigen, "Between the Museum and the Marketplace: Selling Good Design" in J. Elderfield, ed., *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad. Studies in Modern Art 4*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1995, p.151.

¹⁸ T. Riley and E. Eigen, "Between the Museum and the Marketplace", p. 151.

¹⁹ Only those design items available for purchase were eligible for inclusion in the exhibition. E. Kaufmann, Jr., and F. Juhl, "Good Design '51 as Seen by its Director and by its Designer," *Interiors* 110, no. 8 (March 1951), p.100. At the close of the year Kaufmann selected a sampling of objects from the January and June shows for exhibition at MoMA. T. Riley and E. Eigen, "Between the Museum and the Marketplace," p. 151.

²⁰ Good Design, exh. pamphlet, Merchandise Mart; Museum of Modern Art, 1953, n.p. quoted in Mary-Ann Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, The MIT Press, 1998, p. 176.

²¹ T. Riley and E. Eigen, "Between the Museum and the Marketplace, p. 151.

²² "U.S. Exhibition of Furnishings to Tour Europe," *Herald Tribune*, 8/31/1950, MoMA Archives, NY: PI, I [14; 661].

²³ T. Riley and E. Eigen note that the Good Design series represented an unprecedented initiative within the U.S. T. Riley and E. Eigen, "Between the Museum and the Marketplace", p. 151.

²⁴ J. de Hart Mathews, "Art and Politics in Cold War America," The American Historical Review 81, no. 4. (October 1976): 762-787.

²⁵ See A. B. Louchheim, "Museum Reports on Tour Program: Modern Art Gives Showing of Our Contemporary Works Being Circulated Abroad" *New York Times*, December 16, 1953. Louchheim claimed exhibitions of this kind represented some of the few "non-controversial" projects that United States agencies had undertaken in cooperation with MoMA.

²⁶ "Europe to See Good Designs from America," *Times Herald*, 9/18/1950, MoMA Archives, NY: PI, I [14: 664].

²⁷ A selection committee comprised of Kaufmann, as well as critics, design professionals and designers chose each of the Good Design exhibitions. T. Riley and E. Eigen, "Between the Museum and the Marketplace", p. 157.

²⁸ Hélène Lipstadt assesses the political agendas pursued, not by an institution like MoMA, but by two prominent American designers Charles and Ray Eames in completing assignments for the federal government between WWII to 1976. Specifically, the author discusses how the political objectives of these designers 'naturally overlapped' those of the various agencies with whom they collaborated. See Hélène Lipstadt, "'Natural Overlap': Charles and Ray Eames and the Federal Government", in Donald Albrecht, ed., *The Work of Charles and Ray Eames: A Legacy of Invention*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997.

²⁹ The "Rétrospective du Cinéma Américain", held at the American Information Service, featured 14 American films including "The Avenging Conscience" by D.W. Griffith, Mack Sennett's "The Rounders", "Lost Boundaries" by Louis de Rochemont, "Louisiana Story" by Robert Flaherty and "In the Street" by Helen Levitt, Janice Loeb and James Agee.

³⁰ P. Descargues, "50 ans d'art aux états-unis", *Les Lettres Françaises*, 7 April, 1955.

³¹ C. Lake, "Display Designed to Show Salient Features of U.S. Art", *Christian Science Monitor*, April 16, 1955 in "Summary of French Press Reactions to '50 Ans d'Art aux Etats-Unis,'" May 1, 1956, 8. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: International Council/International Program Exhibition Records. *Modern Art in the United States*. (ICE-F-24-54; Paris): box 21.1.

³² Catalogue Officiel du Salon des Appareils ménagers, 1923. Cited in E. Furlough, "Selling the American Way in Interwar France: Prix Uniques and the Salon des Arts Ménagers," *Journal of Social History*, Spring 1993, vol. 26, p. 503. By the late 1920s the Salon moved beyond the display of household appliances to incorporate decorative arts, furniture and architecture. Coincidentally, this was the venue in Paris where MoMA displayed "Design for Use, USA" (1951-1952) and "U.S. Selections for Berlin Trade Fair" (1952-1954).

³³ G. McDonald, "The Launching of American Art in Postwar France: Jean Cassou and the Musée National d'Art Moderne," *American Art*, vol. 13, no. 1, Spring 1999, pp. 47--50.

³⁴ J. Cassou, "Le Musée d'Art Moderne," *Museum* (Paris) 1, no. 1, 1948, p. 104.

³⁵ L. Morris to R. d'Harnoncourt, 5 November 1954, MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): unprocessed.

³⁶ L. Morris to R. d'Harnoncourt, 5 November 1954, MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): unprocessed.

³⁷ J. Cassou, "Art Museums and Social Life," *Museum* 2, no. 3, 1949, p. 158.

³⁸ J. Cassou, "Preface," *50 Ans d'art aux états-unis: collections du Museum of Modern Art de New York*, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1955, p. 8.

³⁹ J. Cassou, "The Musée d'Art Moderne," *Museum* 1, no. 1, 1948, p. 51.

⁴⁰ The idea for this type of museum had crystallized while Barr was in Europe in 1927 and 1928 where he became familiar with the Bauhaus group. The attempt by the Bauhaus to unify the fine arts with the practical arts apparently resonated with Barr, who through his studies with the noted art historian Professor Charles Morey, believed that all the arts were valid and worthy of the scholar's attention. See A. Cox, "Making America Modern: Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Popularization of Modern Art," *Journal of American Culture*, 7 Fall 1984, p. 20.

⁴¹ A. H. Barr, Jr., "Chronicle of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture", *Painting and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art, 1929-1967*, The Museum of Modern Art, 1977, p. 620. Quoted in C. Grunenberg, "The Politics of Presentation: The Museum of Modern Art, New York," in *Art Apart: Institutions and Ideology Across England and North America*, M. Pointon, ed. Manchester University Press, 1994, p. 194.

⁴² By maintaining separate departments throughout much of its history, MoMA preserved the traditional hierarchy between high art and other forms of cultural production. C. Grunenberg "The Modern Art Museum", in Emma Barber, ed., *Art and its Histories: Contemporary Cultures of Display* Yale University Press in association with The Open University, 1999, p. 32.

⁴³ R. Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art*, Atheneum, 1973, p. 354, 355, 356.

⁴⁴ Drawing on documentation (exhibition catalogues, lectures) produced by MoMA between 1933 and 1939 Terry Smith argues that the museum privileged modern art (painting and sculpture) and even modern architecture over industrial design. See T. Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, 390, 398. See also F. Scott, "From Industrial Art to Design: the Purchase of Domesticity at MoMA, 1929-59" *Lotus International* 1998, 97, p. 106-43. Scott argues that until 1959, the status of industrial design (unlike the fine arts of painting, sculpture and prints) underwent continual questioning and redefinition.

⁴⁵ The Cultural Affairs Office of USIA cooperated with the International Program "to organize and circulate large-scale international exhibitions with the help of the local branches of USIS." MoMA Archives, NY: *Guide to the Records of the International Program of The Museum of Modern Art, 1953-1991*, p. ii.

⁴⁶ In his forthcoming publication *Fall-Out Shelters for the Human Spirit: American Art and Government* historian Michael Krenn examines the respective challenges faced by the private art world in the U.S. and the American Government in establishing an international art program, challenges he argues, effectively circumscribed and eventually destroyed the program.

⁴⁷ "Minutes of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art," 4 May 1954, p. 3, MoMA Archives, NY: IC/IP Administrative Records (unprocessed). D'Harnoncourt was referring to the ongoing attacks by rightwing groups, who in viewing modern art as communistic, strove to censor its display both at home and abroad.

⁴⁸ "Minutes of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art," 4 May 1954, p. 1, MoMA Archives, NY: IC/IP Administrative Records

(unprocessed). The following individuals served as Charter Members: Elizabeth Bliss Parkinson, Mary Potter-Russell, Mrs. R. Rodgers, Mrs. G. Mellon, Mrs. W. Hochschild, Mrs. G. Chapman, Ralph Colin, John de Menil, Leonard Hanna, and Wallace Harrison. Blanchette Rockefeller chaired the committee.

⁴⁹ G. Duhamel, *America the Menace: Scenes From the Life of the Future*, Houghton Mifflin, 1931.

⁵⁰ R. Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, p. 2.

⁵¹ R. Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, p. 113. As Kuisel notes the debate in the 1950s was heavily marked by ideology. Most of these observers were convinced that America was no "consumer paradise" and tried to reveal that fact to their readers.

⁵² "Minutes of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art," 4 May 1954, pp.12--13 MoMA Archives, NY: IC/IP Administrative Records (unprocessed).

⁵³ L. Morris to R. d'Harnoncourt, 5 November 1954, MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): unprocessed.

⁵⁴ R. Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated and Transformed American Culture Since World War II*, Basic Books, 1997, p. 10.

⁵⁵ R. Pells, *Not Like Us*, p. 12.

⁵⁶ R. Pells, *Not Like Us*, p. 154-55.

⁵⁷ T. Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent 1955-69*, The Everyman Art Library, 1996, p. 51.

⁵⁸ R. Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, p. 105.

⁵⁹ Even in 1952, at the time of the Paris showing of "Design for Use, U.S.A.", one of the exhibitors of American washing machines estimated that only 7 per cent of French homes owned washing machines and refrigerators. N. Walker, "Parisian Women Gape at U.S. Furnishings," *Courier-Journal*, February 29, 1952, MoMA Archives, NY: PI, I [14; 704].

⁶⁰ Staff at USIS made clear that exhibitions of this kind represented a critical means for swaying French public opinion, particularly intellectuals (professors, writers, architects, teachers and students) who in turn influenced public opinion. For information on USIS's view of the importance of cultural exchange, see Department of State to Officer in Charge of the American Mission, Paris, 12 February 1952, Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State Central Decimal File, 511.51/1-1353, USIS Semi-Annual Evaluation Report.

⁶¹ H. Cahill, "American Painting and Sculpture," *Modern Art in the United States: A Selection from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*, New York. Arts Council of Great Britain, 1956, p. 28.

⁶² J. Albert-Cartier, *Combat*, "Summary of French Press Reactions to the Exhibition '50 Ans d'Art aux Etats-Unis,' Paris, March 31-May 15, 1955," May 1, 1956, MoMA Archives, NY: IC/IP Exh. Records ICE-F-24-54; (Paris): box 21.1.

⁶³ MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54: press release. The architectural component was based on the exhibition *Built in the USA: Post-War Architecture* organized by Henry Russell-Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler at MoMA in 1953.

⁶⁴ Heavily edited versions of the original essays for that exhibition written by Hitchcock and Drexler were reprinted within the catalogue for "50 Years of American Art."

⁶⁵ H. Russell-Hitchcock, "L'Architecture," *50 Ans d'Art aux États-Unis: Collections du Museum of Modern Art de New York*. (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1955): p. 63.

⁶⁶ H. Russell-Hitchcock, "L'Architecture," p. 65.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ G. Daniel, "Les Arts Appliqués," *50 Ans d'Art aux États-Unis: Collections du Museum of Modern Art de New York*. (Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1955): 75.

⁷⁰ G. Daniel, "Les Arts Appliqués," p. 76.

⁷¹ G. Daniel, "Les Arts Appliqués," p. 75.

⁷² Daniel selected fourteen items by Tupperware for inclusion in "50 Years of American Art". The selection included paper napkin holders, tumblers, a soap box with massager top and covered cylindrical food storage containers.

⁷³ A. J. Clarke, *Tupperware: The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999): p. 36.

⁷⁴ G. Daniel, "Les Arts Appliqués," p. 76.

⁷⁵ Given the restrictions of space, the following analysis of the French press reaction is partial, and focuses principally on the reaction of what many French critics termed the collective arts of industrial design, architecture and photography.

⁷⁶ M. Armand, *Rivarol*, quoted in "Summary of French Press Reactions" MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): box 21.1.

⁷⁷ G. Dornand, *Libération*, in "Summary of French Press Reactions," MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): box 21.1.

⁷⁸ See for example, the comments of J. Bouret, "Cinquante ans d'art aux états-unis," *Franc-Tireur* 31 March 1955.

⁷⁹ For more information on how European critics structured their criticism see D. Ashton, "The European Art Press on American Art, Arts and Architecture, 75, no. 8 (August 1958): p. 7, 29.

⁸⁰ G. Menant, *La Dernière heure lyonnaise* (Grenoble), quoted in "Summary of French Press Reactions," MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): box 21.1.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² B. Champigneulle, *France Illustration*, quoted in "Summary of French Press Reactions," MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): box 21.1.

⁸³ I. Guichard-Meili, *Témoignage-chrétien*, quoted in "Summary of French Press Reactions," MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): box 21.1.

⁸⁴ Pells, *Not Like Us*, 3.

⁸⁵ See for example, J. Cartier, *Le Meridional* (Marseille), quoted in "Summary of French Press Reactions," MoMA Archives, NY: ICE-F-24-54 (Paris): box 21.1.